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USA Coin Album: The San Francisco Mint Half Dollars of 1933

The US Mint produced only one silver coin for circulation in 1933 — an oasis of silver coinage in the midst of a drought

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Chinese Pandas: The Year of the "Pandagram"

By Peter Anthony

Large-size Proof Chinese Panda coins were first minted in 1984.

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From the NGC Archives: 1837 Seated Liberty Half Dime

Riding the Greek Revival fashion that was sweeping American decorative arts in 1835, US Mint Director Robert M. Patterson commissioned new coin designs to feature a classical, seated figure of the goddess Liberty.

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ANA National Money Show Silver Eagle Commemorative

By ANA

Commemorate the American Numismatic Association's 125th anniversary with a special collectors' edition Silver Eagle.

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WWI Centennial 2018 Commemorative Coin Design Competition

By US Mint

The United States Mint is calling for artists to submit designs for the 2018 World War I American Veterans Centennial Silver Dollar.

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NGC Inks Exclusive Signature Label Agreement with Former Perth Mint Director Ed Harbuz

Posted on 2/2/2016

Ed Harbuz, former director of the South African Mint and the Perth Mint of Australia, will hand sign NGC certification labels.

Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) and Miroslaw Edward “Ed” Harbuz have signed an agreement for Harbuz to individually hand-sign certification labels exclusively for NGC.

Harbuz holds the distinction of being the only person in history to have served as director of mints in two different countries. From 1995 to 2001 Harbuz served as Managing Director of the South African Mint, a position equivalent to Mint Director. Two years later, in 2003, Harbuz was selected as CEO of Gold Corporation, which operates the Perth Mint of Australia. Harbuz retired from the Perth Mint last year.



Under Harbuz’s leadership, the Perth Mint developed into a global powerhouse for modern coins. The Perth Mint has been—and continues to be—extraordinarily innovative, releasing a multitude of diverse commemorative coin programs that boast novel subjects and designs, including popular movies, animals and landmarks.

In addition, it utilizes the most advanced coining technologies to strike coins with features such as embedded jewels, colorization, antiquing and selective gilding as well as to issue coins in a variety of unique shapes. One recent issue of Perth, for example, is struck on a planchet that is shaped like Australia.

NGC has graded hundreds of thousands of coins issued by the Perth Mint. Now, NGC can pair these coins with labels hand-signed by Harbuz, creating a unique collectible with enhanced appeal.

Although the South African Mint does not issue as many types of coins as the Perth Mint, it is particularly famous for one modern coin—the Kruggerand. First introduced in 1967, many numismatists consider the iconic Kruggerand to be the first gold bullion coin of the modern era, having predated American Gold Eagles by nearly 20 years.

In addition to the Kruggerand, the South African Mint issues several commemorative coin types such as its Natura and Protea series. It also strikes all of the circulation issues for South Africa.



“NGC is honored to be able to work with Ed Harbuz, who quietly made an enormous impact on the world of modern coin collecting during his years at the South African and Perth Mints,” says Steven R. Eichenbaum, CEO of NGC. “We are excited to be able to recognize his impact with this hand-signed label program.”

Harbuz joins Edmund C. Moy, the former Director of the US Mint, Elizabeth Jones, the former 11th Chief Engraver of the US Mint, and John Mercanti, the former 12th Chief Engraver of the US Mint, who all currently sign labels exclusively for NGC.

Coins graded by NGC and encapsulated with labels individually hand-signed by Ed Harbuz will be available from select retailers starting in March.

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NGC Discovers Extremely Rare Dime

Posted on 2/8/2016

This 1796 JR-7 Variety, submitted under NGC's VarietyPlus service, is the finer of just two known worldwide.

A routine submission of early Bust silver coins which included a well worn 1796 dime for attribution under NGC's VarietyPlus® service has furnished numismatics with its second known example of a previously unique die marriage. The coin's owner was unaware of its significance until alerted by NGC.

Early dimes from 1796 through 1837 are collected by JR varieties. The initials JR are a tribute to US Mint Engraver John Reich who created the Capped Bust Liberty design, and they also reflect the fact that the standard reference on early dimes was published by the John Reich Collectors Society, a club dedicated to the study of all early United States silver and gold coins.



1796 Dime; JR-7
Click images to enlarge.

Variety JR-7 combines a reverse die used for two other die marriages of 1796 dimes with an obverse die that is unique to the JR-7 marriage and was first

identified in 2002. Thus, it was not included within the JR book, which was published in 1984. The only example known until now is the plate coin in the recently published book *Bust Dime Variety Identification Guide* by Winston Zack, Louis Scuderi and Michael Sherrill. That specimen is extremely worn and damaged, and numismatists had been unsuccessful in locating a second specimen until now.

NGC Research Director David W. Lange was not expecting any coins of such importance when examining a seven-piece submission of early United States silver coins that included various denominations. All had been flagged for variety attribution under NGC's VarietyPlus service, and the other coins were all of common or just slightly scarce varieties. The lone dime in this group was a well worn but rather attractive 1796 specimen whose reverse die was very quickly identified by Lange as the familiar Reverse D used for varieties JR-4 and JR-5. The obverse, however, did not match either of these die marriages, and this left only two possibilities: The coin was a new example of the unique JR-7 marriage or it was a previously undiscovered marriage. As the only known example of JR-7 has its obverse nearly obliterated by both wear and scratches, this left just the date position as a comparison point. The new coin proved to have the same positional relationship between its numerals and the bust as the JR-7 plate coin, and its submitter was notified by NGC that he was the owner of a real prize.



1796 Dime; JR-7
Click images to enlarge.

This newly discovered dime rarity was certified by NGC's graders as Very Good-8. Both sides are evenly worn and have attractive, original surfaces of medium gray with a touch of golden toning. This makes it far and way the finer of just two examples known for the rare JR-7 die marriage.

The submission was made by Ron Drzewucki, Sr. of R & D Enterprises in Florissant, Missouri. Contacted by telephone with the good news, Ron was delighted to learn that his coin was so significant, telling NGC that it was part of an old collection that has been off the market for upwards of 60 years. This explains why the current generation of dime specialists had not yet identified this second specimen.

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United States

NGC Certifies First Foreign Gold Pattern Ever Struck by United States

Posted on 2/9/2016

NGC graders have certified a rare 1855 Peruvian Gold Pattern 2 Peso struck at the Philadelphia Mint.

Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) has graded an 1855 Peruvian Pattern 2 Peso in gold that was the first pattern struck by the United States Mint for a foreign country. "Patterns" are sample coins that were struck to test a new design, composition, denomination or other new feature. They were typically struck in extremely small numbers for test and display purposes.



1855 MB Peru 2P Gold Pattern struck by the Philadelphia Mint
Graded NGC PF 62+
[Click images to enlarge.](#)

The Peru 1855 Pattern 2 Peso came about during a turbulent time in that country's early history. After it gained its independence from Spain in 1824, Peru

became part of a short-lived confederation comprised of three states: North Peru, South Peru, and Bolivia. This ended with the War of Confederation in 1839, which resulted in the separate countries of a unified Peru and Bolivia.

After two wars and many internal political issues, Peru faced several serious economic problems. During these wars, many merchants and businessmen had fled the newly founded country, taking with them their wealth. Money shortages developed as a result—any coins that remained in the country were hoarded and a lack of production at silver mines within Peru prevented new coins from being struck.

The shortage of coins resulted in the use of Bolivian coinage, which had lower silver content than the Spanish coinage upon which Peru's economic system had been developed, causing confusion and price instability.

Peru subsequently opened more mints within its borders – at Cusco, Cerro de Pasco, and Arequipa – to create solid Peruvian money based off of the old Spanish weights and purities. A decision was made, however, to transition the coinage system from the Spanish octal (e.g. 8 Reales) system to the decimal system. The United States made pattern coinage samples for Peru, hoping to receive a contract for the production of Peruvian coinage. The Peru 1855 2 Peso struck in gold was minted at the Philadelphia Mint, three years prior to the anticipated transition to the decimal system in 1858. Other decimal coinage was struck at Philadelphia in the hopes of obtaining the coinage contract.



Close up of the 1855 MB Peru 2P Gold Pattern struck by the Philadelphia Mint
Graded NGC PF 62+, obverse (**left**), reverse (**right**)
Click images to enlarge.

Peru, however, opted to continue to produce its own coinage and even modernized the Lima Mint with new steam minting machines from England to replace the aging Spanish colonial equipment. It would be 1863 when Peru finally transitioned to a new system, with the Sol as the replacement for the Spanish

peso. A peso was initially valued at 0.8 soles.

The Peru 1855 Gold Pattern 2 Peso is important in the numismatic histories of both the United States and Peru. While the United States had previously produced issues that circulated overseas, this was the first pattern coinage struck at the Philadelphia Mint for a foreign country. This was done before Congress revoked the legal tender status of the Spanish 8 Reales in the Coinage Act of 1857, and it would not be until 1874 when Congress explicitly authorized the United States Mint to contract to manufacture coins for foreign governments (provided that these contracts did not interfere with the required coinage of the United States). For Peru, it marked a transition in their economic history which took years to complete. Ultimately, the foresight that economic reform was needed for financial stability proved to be correct.

The Philadelphia Mint is believed to have struck only six examples of the Peru 1855 Gold Pattern 2 Peso. Of these, NGC has certified two, this example being graded NGC PF 62+. The other, formerly from the collection of King Farouk, was graded NGC PF 63. A third example is in the National Numismatic Collection of the Smithsonian Museum and the other three examples are not publicly known today.

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Modern Chinese Varieties: 2005 G50Y Colorized Rooster

Posted on 2/9/2016

This is the 13th installment of our monthly column featuring modern Chinese varieties.

This month's featured coin is the 2005 Gold 50 Yuan Colorized Rooster coins that can be found with either coin or medal alignment.

The reverse side of the coin features the denomination and the colorized Rooster. NGC typically places most modern Chinese coins with this side up (denomination side) since it normally depicts the theme of the coin **(PHOTO #1)**.



2005 G50Y Colorized Rooster, reverse
Click image to enlarge.

The obverse of the coin also depicts a Rooster and the date of the coin is shown in normal coin orientation on the left **(PHOTO #2)** and in medallion orientation on the right **(PHOTO #3)**.



2005 G50Y Colorized Rooster, obverse - normal coin orientation **(left)**, medallion orientation **(right)**
Click images to enlarge.

Look for another interesting variety to be featured next month.

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United States

NGC Now Recognizing Heaton Dies on Kwangtung Dollars

Posted on 2/9/2016

NGC has begun to identify Heaton-issued Kwangtung (1890–1908) Silver Dollars.

The Kwangtung (1890-1908) Silver Dollar (or the “7 Mace, 2 Candareens” denomination) was the product of designs developed by the Heaton Mint of Birmingham, England, in negotiations with the governments of China and Kwangtung province to produce circulating coinage. Several different patterns were produced before the final design for the dragon dollar was approved.



Heaton Kwangtung Dollar, obverse (**left**), Normal Kwangtung Dollar, obverse (**right**)
Click images to enlarge.



Kwangtung Dollar, reverse
Click images to enlarge.

Although the circulation issues were ultimately struck locally in China, one variety of (1890-1908) Kwangtung Dollars features a design that is very similar to one of the original designs proposed by the Heaton Mint. These “Heaton Dies” dollars differ from the other dollars in several ways.

The rosettes on the coins are different and feature a hollow center on the Heaton Dies variety. The Chinese characters “Ku” (of the Ku-Ping weight system) and “Kuang” are also different—the center stroke does not connect to the top of the character as it does on the generic dies.



Side by side of the Heaton Kwangtung Dollar (**left**)
 and Normal Kwangtung Dollar (**right**), obverse
Click images to enlarge.

This variety has long been known and is very popular among Chinese coin collectors. It will now be recognized and noted by NGC. No special request or additional fee is required.

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United States

NGC Accepting Submissions at ANA National Money Show

Posted on 2/9/2016

Drop off your NGC submissions at the ANA National Money Show in Dallas.

NGC will be accepting regular submissions for all service levels* at the [ANA National Money Show](#), at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, Texas starting on Thursday, March 3 until noon on Saturday, March 5, 2016. Check with show staff for cut-off time. **Cut-off time may change due to submission volumes.** NGC will be at booth 801. All submissions will be sent to our office in Sarasota, FL. Services include World Services, Ancient Coin Services, Bulk, PHOTO PROOF® and more. Check with show representatives for details.

Note:

- Due to the special handling required, NGC does not accept submissions of the following coins at this show for regular service submissions to be returned to the NGC offices: Coins over 3.5" (90 mm) in diameter and .39" (10 mm) in depth, March of Dimes 3-coin set, 2013 American Buffalo One Ounce Gold Reverse Proof, West Point 2-coin set, San Francisco 2-coin Proof set, Coin & Currency sets, 25th Anniversary Eagles, 20th Anniversary Eagles, Early and First Releases, American Liberty Series and 10th Anniversary Platinum Sets. These submissions must be sent directly to Sarasota, FL, by the submitter.
- *Does not include 5-ounce coins.

Questions should be directed to NGC customer service at service@NGCcoin.com or 1-800-NGC-COIN (642-2646).

Visit our table for answers to any questions about the services offered by NGC. Please remember that NGC does not provide opinions or free evaluations of coins

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NGC Registry News

Posted on 2/9/2016

Take a look at the new NGC Registry sets released in the last few weeks.

January just flew by for our NGC Registry staff while we worked hard to add slots for all of the new 2016-dated US and world coins as well as to add new sets requested by NGC Registry users.

We are receiving many requests as to when the 2015 NGC Registry awards, for those who received them, will be mailed out. Please be assured that our team is working hard to compile all that is needed to get them out the door to you. Due to the record number of awards for 2015, this process will take some time. We are hoping to begin mailing them out in March. Every year, unfortunately, some awards come back to us as undeliverable, due to an outdated mailing address. Please ensure the address you have on file on-line in your Collector Society account is accurate. This is the address we will use to mail your awards to you. If you need assistance updating your address, you may email NGC Customer Service for assistance at service@NGCcoin.com.

Meanwhile, there are countless new NGC Registry sets that are just waiting to be loaded up with your numismatic treasures. Please take a peek at the brand new sets released in the last few weeks:

New Categories

- Yugoslavia

New Sets

- China - Republic (Incl. Taiwan): 5 Cents (5 Fen), 1936-1941, Complete Circulation Issue
- China - Commemorative: Classic Gardens Medals, 2010-Date, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 1996 Romance of the 3 Kingdoms, Series Two,

- Proof
- China - Commemorative: 1997 Romance of the 3 Kingdoms, Series Three, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 1995-1997 Romance of the 3 Kingdoms, Complete Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2001 Chinese Folktales, Series I, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2002 Chinese Folktales, Series II, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2003 Chinese Folktales, Series III, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2001-2003 Chinese Folktales Series, Complete Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2004 Maijishan Grotto, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2002-2006 Longmen Grotto, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2010 Yungang Grotto, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 2002-2010 Grottoes, Complete Proof
- Cook Islands: Silver \$5, 2009-Date, Circulation Issue
- Cook Islands: Silver \$10, 2012-Date, Prooflike
- Germany: Silver 10 Euro, 2002-Date, Circulation Issue
- Haiti: 50 Gourdes, 1973-Date, Circulation Issue
- Hong Kong (British Rule): 2 Dollars, 1988-1997, Proof
- India-Portuguese: Type set, Goa, 1804-1869, Circulation
- Rwanda and Burundi: Silver 500 Francs, 2013-Date, Proof
- San Marino: 2 Lire, 1898-1997, Circulation Issue
- Thailand: Silver 100 Baht, 1974-Date, Complete
- Thailand: Rama IX, Baht Type Set, 1957-Date, Circulation Issue
- Thailand: Rama IX, 5 Baht Type Set, 1972-Date, Circulation Issue
- Thailand: Rama IX, 10 Baht Type Set, 1977-Date, Circulation Issue
- Thailand: Rama IX, 10 Baht, 1982-Date, Proof
- Tokelau: Silver \$10, 2016-Date, Mint State
- Turks & Caicos: Silver Crown, 1986-1993, Proof
- Turks & Caicos: Silver 10 Crowns, 1975-1985, Proof
- Turks & Caicos: Silver 20 Crowns, 1974-1999, Proof
- Turks & Caicos: Silver 25 Crowns, 1977-2000, Proof
- Turks & Caicos: Gold 50 Crowns, 1974-1978, Complete Proof
- Turks & Caicos: Gold 100 Crowns, 1974-1988, Proof
- Vatican: Pius IX, 1846-1870, Circulation Issue
- Yugoslavia: Silver 100 Dinara, 1978-Date, Proof
- Yugoslavia: Silver 250 Dinara, 1979-Date, Proof
- Yugoslavia: Silver 500 Dinara, 1980-Date, Proof

New Slots

Here is a list of just some of the sets and categories where we have added new slots:

- Australia - Decimal: One Dollar, 1984-Date, Proof
- Australia - Commemorative: Silver Dollars, 2008-Date, Mint State
- Australia - Bullion: Kangaroo Silver Dollars, 1990-Date, Complete (Incl. Varieties)
- Canada - Bullion: Silver Maple Leafs - Special Issues
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$2, Commemorative Issues, 2002-Date, Proof
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$3, Commemorative Issues, 2004-Date, Proof
- Canada - Commemorative: Three Dollars, Commemorative Issues, 2004-Date, Specimen and Proof
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$4, 2004-Date, Proof
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$5, Commemorative Issues, 1973-Date, Proof
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$5, Commemorative Issues, 1973-Date, Complete
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$10, Commemorative Issues, 1973-Date, Proof
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$10, Commemorative Issues, 1973-Date, Proof and Specimen
- Canada - Commemorative: Silver \$30, 2005-Date, Proof
- Canada - Bullion: Silver \$50 (Five Ounces), 2006-Date, Proof
- Canada - Bullion: Silver 5 Ounce Coinage, 2015-Date, Proof
- China - Commemorative: 1995 Medals, Mint State and Proof
- China - Commemorative: Qi Baishi Set, 1997, Proof
- China - Panda: Gold 1/10 Ounce Panda, 1982-Date, Mint State (Incl. Varieties)
- China - Panda: Silver Panda 1 Ounce Medals, 1984-Date, Mint State and Proof
- China - Panda: Silver Panda Medals, 1984-Date, Proof
- China - Panda: Panda Medals, 1984-Date, Complete
- Cook Islands: Silver \$25, 2007-Date, Proof
- Great Britain- Sovereigns and Bullion: Britannia Silver 2 Pounds, 1998-Date, Mint State
- India - British Colony: Rupee, 1862-1947, Circulation Issue
- Niue: Silver \$1, 2007-Date, Proof
- Niue: Silver \$2 Circulation Issue Set
- Niue: Silver \$2, 2006-Date, Proof

- Rwanda and Burundi
- Somalia
- Zambia
- US: Cents
- US: Nickels
- US: National Parks – Quarters
- US: Gold Bullion Issues
- US: American Eagles
- US: Gold Eagles

Do you have an NGC-certified coin in your hand, and you’re not sure where it may fit in the NGC Registry? We are here to help with requests and with other questions you may have. Feel free to send us an email, and let us know exactly how we can help. Reach us easily via email at registry@NGCcoin.com

If you're not familiar with the [NGC Registry](#), take some time to explore it, and see the many collecting options that are available. It is completely complimentary. If you have any questions, you may also click below for our help page:

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NGC Ancients: A Pedigreed Irish Collection of Ancient Coins

Posted on 2/9/2016

It is wonderful to speculate about who assembled this collection, and about where and when the coins were acquired.

One of the great pleasures associated with ancient coins is the discovery of an old pedigree. It reminds us that we are merely the most recent in a long line of collectors who have appreciated the coins of antiquity.

Ancient coins have been deeply appreciated since the 14th Century. Indeed, it was customary for educated young men of the Renaissance (and also in the 18th and 19th Centuries) to possess a strong knowledge of ancient coins. Coins were recognized as prime resources for the understanding of the foundations of Western Civilization, and it was a mark of distinction to have a collection.



Spain, Barscunes
This drachm-denarius was struck at Barscunes, located in modern Spain.
NGC Ch VF★
[Click images to enlarge.](#)

In the summer of 2015 an NGC dealer member, [NFC](#) of Winter Springs, Florida, acquired a coin collection that had been sold intact at public auction in Dublin, Ireland. The lot consisted of an ornate wood coin cabinet and the coins that filled its eleven pull-out trays. In addition to a core collection of 175 Greek and Roman coins, the cabinet also included a smattering of coins of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, which probably were just random additions rather than a focused collection.



A few collection tickets from the MacCormack Collection
Click images to enlarge.

It is wonderful to speculate about who assembled this collection, and about where and when the coins were acquired. A few of the original tickets that accompanied the coins record acquisitions in Liverpool, England. We may, however, speculate that most were acquired in London, which has always been the center of the ancient coin trade in England.

NGC was fortunate to receive this collection for identification, grading and encapsulation. Recovering the pedigree was no easy task, and required that the submitter consult the auction house, which, in turn, contacted the consignor. In the process some valuable information was retrieved.



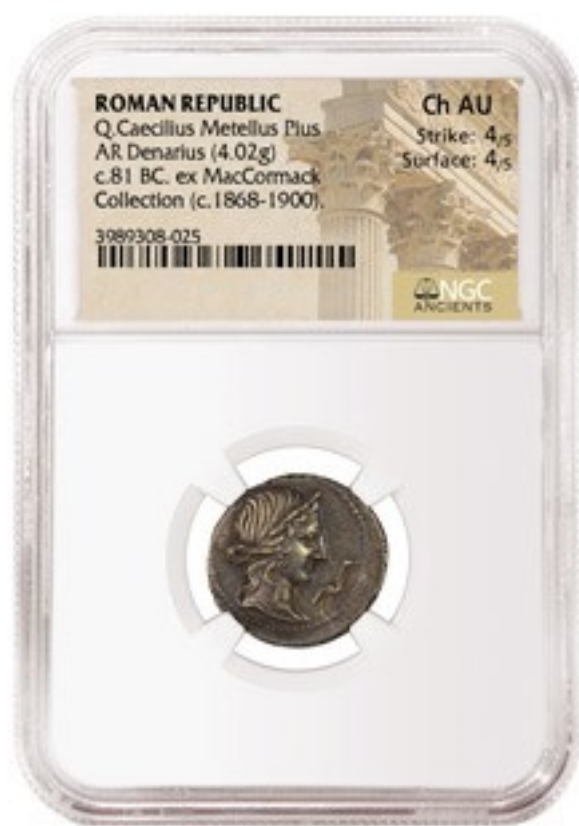
Campia, Neapolis
This stater was issued at Neapolis, modern Naples, Italy
NGC XF★
Click images to enlarge.

The consignor had inherited the coins through his family. They once had belonged to one of his great-uncles who had lived most of his adult life in Belfast. It seems that no one in the family had taken an interest in the dusty old box of coins, so it was passed down to the consignor as an afterthought. As he noted in correspondence, “...I ended up with the box when [my eldest sister] was clearing out my family home and nobody wanted it so [the family] saddled it on me...rather nice now to have been saddled with it !!! :).”



Roman Republic, Anonymous
 This quadrigatus is the earliest Roman coin in the MacCormack collection.
 NGC Ch VF★
[Click images to enlarge.](#)

Attaching a name to the collection was a challenge since knowledge of the original collector had passed from family memory. The consignor noted, however, that his father had always insisted that his family was Scottish, hailing from the Isle of Skye, and that the family name originally had spelled beginning with 'Mac'. Thus, NGC preserved the old spelling of the name, MacCormack, rather than using the family's current form, McCormack.



Roman Republic, Q. Caecilius
 The head of the goddess Roma graces the obverse of this Republican denarius.
 NGC Ch AU
[Click images to enlarge.](#)

Armed with this information, and evidence from the many hand-in-inked collector's

tags that accompanied the coins, NGC was able to determine that most of the ancient coins had been purchased between about 1868 and 1900. Based upon this, we formulated the pedigree: “ex MacCormack Collection (assembled c.1868-1900)” that appears on the NGC identification labels.



Roman Republic, Q. Marcius
MacCormack Collection
NGC Ch VF
Click images to enlarge.

NGC graded and encapsulated 175 ancient coins from the “MacCormack” collection including 15 coins of the ancient Greek world, 84 of the Roman Republic, 11 of the Roman Imperial era, and 65 of the Roman Empire.



Roman Republic, Q. Sicinius & C. Coponius
MacCormack Collection
NGC AU★
Click images to enlarge.

The Greek coins are all silver, and consist mainly of issues from Greece and Greek colonies in Southern Italy. To these we may add lone ‘Greek’ issues from Barscunes (in modern Spain) and Massalia (in modern France). The Greek coins date from the mid-4th through the 1st Centuries B.C.

Many of the coins are from the Roman Republic, and except for a lovely silver ‘quadrigatus’ of the Second Punic War (dated c.225-214/2 B.C.), all are silver denarii issued from the mid-2nd to the mid-1st Centuries B.C. Many bear on their obverse the iconic helmeted head of Roma, but there is a significant variety of types.



Roman Empire, Claudius
A wonderful portrait of the Emperor Claudius appears on this as.
NGC Ch VF
Click images to enlarge.

The collection also contained 11 coins issued during the ‘Roman Imperial’ era, during which civil wars caused the collapse of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire. It principally includes silver denarii of Julius Caesar (murdered 44 B.C.) and Octavian (who in 27 B.C. was hailed Rome’s first emperor). Ten of these coins are silver denarii, and one is a fractional silver coin called a quinarius.



Roman Empire, Hadrian
The bust of the Emperor Hadrian on this denarius is engraved in fine style.
NGC Ch VF
Click images to enlarge.

The 65 coins of the Roman Empire in this collection span the reigns of Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14) to Commodus (A.D. 177-192), together with a lone coin outside that range, a base metal sestertius of the Emperor Gordian III (A.D. 238-244). In this segment there is a good mix of silver denarii and base metal asses and dupondii, all of which bear the portrait of a Roman emperor, empress or Caesar. Included are coins of famous emperors, such as Augustus, Tiberius, Nero, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.



Roman Empire, Mar. Aurelius
The philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius is portrayed on this dupondius.
Graded NGC XF
Click images to enlarge.

The composition of the Roman Imperial coins suggests the collector had embraced the prejudices (for lack of a better word) of his times since, except for the sestertius of Gordian III, the collection has no coins issued after the reign of Commodus. After all, relatively few classicists of the 19th Century paid notice to Roman history after the reign of Commodus, which generally was considered the end of Classical Antiquity.

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Counterfeit Detection: Altered Mintmarks

Posted on 2/9/2016

Something as small as a mintmark can dramatically change the price of a coin.

In numismatics, the location at which a coin was minted can mean a value difference of tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars. For example, an 1894 Barber Dime minted in Philadelphia might be worth \$100. But if you give that same coin a tiny “S” for San Francisco below the wreath on the reverse, it could suddenly be worth upwards of a million dollars.

Unfortunately, when there’s money to be made on such relatively small differences on coins, counterfeiters take notice. These forgers can change a coin’s mintmark in multiple ways. For example, while an 1895 San Francisco or New Orleans Mint Morgan Dollar is relatively rare in its own right, the 1895 Philadelphia Morgan is the undisputed king of the Morgan dollar series. With a mintage of only 880, all of which were proofs, this coin is expensive in all grades. Therefore, it’s unsurprising that an enterprising coin doctor would attempt to remove the mintmark from a San Francisco or New Orleans issue. Such is the case with the coin below.



1895 Morgan Dollar with removed mint mark

As you can see, the coin looks decent at first glance. However, with the knowledge that there were about 1,000 times as many 1895-S and 1895-O Morgan Dollars struck, one must be mindful to check the mintmark area. When you do, you will notice that there is an area of disturbed metal and tool marks where the mintmark would normally be. This coin has been altered and taught someone a very expensive lesson.



Close-up of removed mint mark on 1895 Morgan Dollar
Click images to enlarge.

In other cases, the counterfeiter will actually add a mintmark that wasn't there before. They can accomplish this in a multitude of different ways. The first we will discuss is the most common. It involves literally gluing a fake mintmark to the coin. This is usually the least convincing type. As you can see on the 1889-CC Morgan Dollar below, there is a clear discoloration around the Carson City "CC" mintmark below the wreath on the reverse. This discoloration is due to a foreign substance, likely some sort of adhesive, being present underneath the mintmark. There was once even a case of a 1909-S VDB being submitted to NGC for grading that had its "S" mintmark fall off in the flip. I suppose the counterfeiter should have used a stronger adhesive!



1889-CC Morgan Dollar with added "CC" mint mark
Click images to enlarge.



Close-up of added "CC" mint mark
Click images to enlarge.

Another type of added mintmark, known as embossing, can often be much more deceptive. In this case, a hole is drilled into the edge of a coin. A specialized tool, usually made from needle-nose pliers, is then inserted into this tiny hole until it is directly underneath the place where the mintmark should be. Then, the tool is closed, pushing metal up to form a mintmark on the surface of the coin. This often creates a very realistic looking mintmark.

Embossed mintmarks are most often found on Buffalo Nickels as they have a thick, smooth edge with a mintmark very close to the rim of the coin. The smooth edge leads to a much easier repair for the counterfeiter, and the short distance to the mintmark means less drilling as well. However, skilled forgers are now able to alter reeded edged coins as well. For example, the 1889-S Morgan Dollar below started its life as an 1889-P.



1889-S Morgan Dollar with added "S" mint mark
Click images to enlarge.



Close-up of added "S" mint mark
Click images to enlarge.



Close-up of edge of 1889-S Morgan Dollar
directly below mint mark area
Click images to enlarge.

As you can see from the close-ups, the mintmark itself looks pretty decent. However, the edge is where you can see something is amiss. The dark spot right in the center of the image is the spot at which the forger drilled into the coin. Tool marks on the bottom edge of the rim help bring attention to the area as well. They were likely caused by the counterfeiter removing extra molten metal that had gotten on the edge.

When something as small as a mintmark can change the price of a coin by thousands of dollars, it is important to be diligent and know the possibility that alterations do occur. A collector looking to buy a rare coin should research what actual examples look like. If you are not completely confident in your own abilities, a coin graded by NGC is always guaranteed to be authentic.

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United States

USA Coin Album: The San Francisco Mint Half Dollars of 1933

Posted on 2/9/2016

The US Mint produced only one silver coin for circulation in 1933 — an oasis of silver coinage in the midst of a drought

It's rare that I devote an entire column to a single coin issue, but there are certain United States coins that stand out for their novelty and collector appeal. Such an entry is the San Francisco half dollar of 1933, the only silver coin produced for circulation that year by the U. S. Mint.



The paucity of USA coins dated 1933 may be explained by the severe economic crisis gripping the nation and the world at the time.

While there had been numerous financial panics in American history, only the years 1930-33 have come to be labeled the “Great Depression.” In fact, the economic recovery that began in 1934 was anemic, and yet another recession set in during 1937-38. Nevertheless, 1933 is viewed as the nadir of American prosperity, and there was so little money changing hands that the need for additional coins was almost non-existent.

Coin production had begun to decline in 1930, shortly after the stock market crash of October, 1929. This was most pronounced at the Denver Mint, and the agricultural Midwest had already been in a slump for the past several years. The only 1930-D coinage was in cents, always the most universally needed entry. San Francisco coined cents through quarter dollars, but in smaller numbers than previously. It also struck gold eagles and double eagles, but these had no bearing

on the supply of coins seen by the public, as they already commanded a slight premium over face value and were either shipped overseas or held in reserve. At the Philadelphia Mint coinage figures were higher in 1930 than at the western facilities, but still way down from 1929. All current denominations were issued, with the exceptions of half dollars and gold coins.

By 1931 there existed very little demand for additional coins, those produced in the booming years 1916-20 and 1923-29 being quite sufficient to handle the lessened commercial activity. Excluding the unseen gold denominations, the only coins struck that year were relatively small numbers of cents and dimes at all three mints, plus just over a million 1931-S nickels. In 1932 the only coins needed for circulation were small mintages of cents from the Philadelphia and Denver Mints (many of these coins lingered in storage for the next couple of years, much to the frustration of collectors seeking examples). That summer, all three mints struck the new Washington quarter as a circulating commemorative, but the demand for them in commerce was almost non-existent. Not until 1934 did they begin to be released by banks in quantity.

By 1933 activity at all U. S. Mint facilities was so slow that their combined employee rosters had fallen to 392 persons from the 687 of just five years earlier. Philadelphia coined only cents, eagles and double eagles, while Denver's output was limited to a modest production of cents and the 5,250 Oregon Trail halves struck in July.

By all rights the San Francisco Mint should have produced no coins at all during 1933, yet it ended up striking a generous 1,786,000 half dollars of the regular type (what prompted this demand is not recorded in surviving documents, yet San Francisco more than doubled that production in 1934, so they need must have been real). Coinage commenced October 27, with a total of 110,000 pieces delivered by the coiner through the end of that month. Deliveries continued daily (excluding weekends) through December 21. This suggests that the work was performed with just a single press producing an average of around 45,800 coins per day.

A clue as to why so many half dollars were coined may be found in the fact that the San Francisco Mint had been the only one to strike half dollars for circulation on a recurring basis after 1921. Philadelphia struck no halves 1922-33, and during that same period Denver made half dollars only in 1929. Clearly the western states embraced half dollars more than did the rest of the nation. The demand for additional coins that built up during the final quarter of 1933 was thus not the fluke that it might seem to collectors.

1933-S half dollars are notable for their excellent luster and bold strikes. Typically they are sharper than most issues in this popular coin series. Indeed, they would make ideal subjects for the type collector, were it not for their relatively high cost in the upper grades. A fair number were saved in Mint State, and such coins are not truly rare. Even so, the vast majority went into circulation at or near their time of coining and remained there for decades. By 1960 this was a “keeper” in any grade, so the surviving population of heavily worn examples is high.

Despite its generous mintage, the 1933-S half dollar has not revealed any collectable varieties. Such a quantity would have required at least half a dozen die pairs, but to my knowledge no one has attempted to identify the individual dies. This issue has always fascinated me as the only silver coined for circulation in that dreadful year of unemployment and despair. It survives as a historic memento of truly hard times.

David W. Lange's column, “USA Coin Album,” appears monthly in The Numismatist, the official publication of the [American Numismatic Association](#).

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Chinese Pandas: The Year of the "Pandagram"

Posted by Peter Anthony on 2/9/2016

Large-size Proof Chinese Panda coins were first minted in 1984.

February is Chinese New Year month and nearly everyone knows that 2016 is the Year of the Monkey. For collectors of Panda coins, 2016 is also the year of the Pandagram, the year that the series goes metric. The weights of all 2016 Panda coins are in grams, not ounces. So far, the transition to metric weights has gone smoothly. There is strong demand for all the denominations and the initial supply of the 1 and 3 gram coins was quickly depleted. Coins graded MS 70 by NGC are especially sought after. Most collectors I know want to own some, or all of the new coins.

There is tremendous interest in two new proof gold Pandas that haven't yet been publicly released. These are the 800 Yuan, 50 gm and the 1500 Yuan, 100 gm Pandas. Their mintages will be much lower than their BU one ounce gold counterparts; only 20,000 of the proof 800 Yuan and 10,000 for the 1,500 Yuan. That compares to one million BU 500 Yuan coins.



The first larger than one ounce gold Panda was struck in 1984.
In 2016 there are two new large size gold Pandas:
an 800 Yuan that tilts the scales at 50 grams and a 1,500 Yuan that weighs 100 grams.

Large size proof Pandas (more than an ounce) have a long history in the series. The first one was a 1984 1,000 Yuan 12 oz. gold coin. (12 oz. is one pound in

Troy ounces). It had a mintage of 250 and sold out nearly immediately. The artwork was by famed Shanghai Mint artist Mr. Chen Jian. He has remarked that the pose is almost a mirror image of the 1982 Panda that he also designed. To date, the 1984 1,000 Yuan gold Pandas are unknown in the highest grades. Besides the small quantity struck, the original packaging tended to cause hairlines on the coins. The plastic pouch also contains PVC, a substance harmful to coins.

China Gold Coin, the branch of the central bank that handles precious metal coins, does not sell directly to the public (with one minor exception). Instead it uses a system of distributors to sell its coins at both the wholesale and retail levels. The 1984 1,000 Yuan gold Panda was initially distributed solely by Panda America, one of the four original Panda coin distributors. By 1986, when the next 1,000 Yuan gold Panda was minted, the other three primary distributors—Taisei Japan, Taisei Singapore and M.T.B. (Manfred, Tordella, Brooks in New York)—all wanted allocations of the coin, too. So the 1986 mintage came in at 2,550, ten times as many coins as in 1984.

Demand for the 1986 1,000 Yuan gold Panda was healthy. The price of the coins immediately jumped to a premium above their release price. In 1987 there was not only a 12 oz. gold Panda, but also a 5 oz. minted. These sold well, too, and were again struck in 1988. By 1989, though, buyer fatigue was setting in. Not only did the coin market need to absorb thousands of 12 oz. and 5 oz. gold Panda coins, but nine different 1 oz. gold Panda show commemoratives had also been released in 1987 and 1988.

It was not until 1990 that another 12 oz. gold Panda was struck. The mintage was reduced to 500, but even this proved unsustainable in the recession economy of the time. The final 12 oz. gold Panda made its appearance in 1995. The official mintage is 99, but the actual quantity was lower.

In 1997, a 1 kg. gold proof Panda was released. It was the first large size metric weight Panda. Since then every year except 1998 has had a 1 kg gold proof Panda as part of its program. Official mintages have increased to 500 per year. This year, it will be joined by two other large gold Pandas weighed in grams. So 2016 is not only the Year of the Monkey, but the Year of the "Pandagrams".

Peter Anthony is an expert on Chinese modern coins with a particular focus on Panda coins. He is an analyst for the [NGC Chinese Modern Coin Price Guide](#) as well as a consultant on Chinese modern coins.

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United States

From the NGC Archives: 1837 Seated Liberty Half Dime

Posted on 2/9/2016

Riding the Greek Revival fashion that was sweeping American decorative arts in 1835, US Mint Director Robert M. Patterson commissioned new coin designs to feature a classical, seated figure of the goddess Liberty.

Working from a drawing by artist Thomas Sully, engraver Christian Gobrecht prepared dies for the new issues, which debuted in 1837.



Given the novelty of its design (all previous US coins featured busts), the new Seated Liberty Half Dimes were saved in fairly high numbers. While mint state examples are thus not rare, gems are in the minority and remain particular favorites with type collectors. In addition, this Small Date variety was described by Walter Breen as Much rarer choice than [the Large Date]. A blazing, white gem, this amazing specimen is entirely untoned and displays dazzlingly frosty luster. Its also fully struck and features very clean surfaces.

Are you interested in learning more about these coins? Click [here](#) to visit the NGC Coin Explorer and read on.



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ANA National Money Show Silver Eagle Commemorative

Posted by ANA on 2/9/2016

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United States

WWI Centennial 2018 Commemorative Coin Design Competition

Posted by US Mint on 2/9/2016

The United States Mint is calling for artists to submit designs for the 2018 World War I American Veterans Centennial Silver Dollar.

The United States Mint is pleased to announce a public competition to design the 2018 World War I American Veterans Centennial Silver Dollar. This competition is open to US citizens and permanent residents who are at least 18 years or older.



During Phase One of the competition, which is open from February 29–April 28, 2016, artists are encouraged to submit their contact information and three to five work samples using the online form.

Up to 20 applicants from Phase One will be selected to participate in Phase Two, where they will create and submit designs and plasters for the final coin.

For more details and to learn how to submit your entry, please visit the [rules](#) and Frequently Asked Questions ([FAQs](#)) sections of this site.

For more information visit the [US Mint's website](#).

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